#### Texas Student Media

**Board of Operating Trustees Meeting** 

March 27, 2015 at 1:00 p.m.

Belo Center for New Media,

KUT Community Room (BM 1.108A)

300 W. Dean Keaton Street., Austin, Texas 78712

**Voting Members Present:** Arthur D. Soto-Vasquez, Bobby Blanchard, Arjun Mocherla, Pauline Berens, Robert Quigley, Jeff Cohen

**Voting Members Absent:** Mary Dunn, Adam Alloy, Matt Eastin, Heidi Toprac, Todd Ross Nienkerk

**Non-Voting Members Present:** Riley Brands, Jordan Rudner, Rodrigo Leal, Edward Stockwell, Tess Cagle, Chris Gilman, Peter Flynn

Non-Voting Members Absent: Gerald Johnson, Rohan Needel

**Guests Present:** Frank Serpas, Jack Mitts, Stewart Vanderwilt, Brett Donohoe, Denise Twellmann, Curt Yowell, Claire Smith, Jan Ross Piedad

## **Meeting Opening**

The Texas Student Media Board of Operating Trustees March 27, 2015 meeting was called to order at 1:11 pm by Arjun Mocherla.

Approval of the minutes of the February 6, February 13, and February 27, 2015 meetings of the TSM Board of Operating Trustees

Riley Brands questioned the February 27, 2015 minutes, asking whether it should be noted that one applicant withdrew. Pauline Berens clarified that that was noted in a different paragraph in the same minutes.

Bobbly Blanchard made a motion to accept the February 6, February 13, and February 27, 2015 minutes as written. Robert Quigley seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

Declaration of election results following written report of results from Election Supervisory Board

Arjun Mocherla showed the written report of the election results to the Board. There were no questions or objections, and Arjun moved to approve the results.

### **Executive Committee Report**

Arjun Mocherla stated that there was no quorum for the executive committee, so the committee did not meet.

# Discussion and possible action regarding 2015-2016 TSM budget

As Gerald Johnson was not in attendance, the Board did not go through the specifics of the budget. Frank Serpas stated that there was another month this year to meet the deadline, so it could be looked into at the next meeting. He also stated that everything looked good for this year, thanks to the extra money that came in in the form of gifts and from no longer having to pay for utilities.

Arjun Mocherla stated that it would be a good idea to become less dependent on funding from the SSBC, as they are funding many things and it is not guaranteed into the future. He said that it would be nice to not have to need the funding in order to break even.

Stewart Vanderwilt noted that while it is a good think to work to become less dependent, there is also a strong case to be made for why the funding should continue regardless. He stated that as the organization gets on a stronger financial footing, the case for why we need the funding becomes stronger, as it proves to be a good investment.

Arjun Mocherla agreed, clarifying that he mainly did not want to be dependent in order to break even. He also said that he asked the student managers for their opinions about where they want the money to be allocated for the next year.

Robert Quigley brought up that it would be good to look at what the budget would look like if we were able to restore the 50% pay cut made to the students working at the various entities. Jordan Rudner clarified that if the whole 50% could not be restored, any bit would help. She said that the pay cuts changed who was able to work at the Daily Texan. While she emphasized that she wanted her staff to be fairly compensated and did not think that they currently were, she said that it was more important that restoring wages would open the doors for people to work. She noted that some people were possibly being prevented from working at the Texan as they needed to make money for their time.

Edward Stockwell noted that the pay cuts were not necessarily affecting TSTV as significantly as they were the Daily Texan, as the pay at TSTV was so little it could hardly be the difference. He also stated that while he did not want to speak for everyone, the thought that if it was a question of a small increase in pay or a new camera, he would guess that his staff would chose the new camera.

Claire Smith also suggested that the high turnover in staff between semesters could possibly be influenced by the inability of the Daily Texan to fairly compensate that staff.

Robert Quigley suggested that the Friends of the Daily Texan might be interested in contributing to student wages. Jeff Cohen stated that they currently did have some reserve money, as well as about \$50,000 allocated to a digital archiving project that had stalled. He said that he recommended that they use that money for student wages, but the allocation was specific. He also noted that that amount of money, while significant, would not put as where we want to be long term, and that the best way to get money to pay the staff would be to ask the advertising staff to generate it. Jordan Rudner noted that she had talked about some other ways to get smaller one time injections of money, such as a twitter campaign. Frank Serpas also brought up

that utilizing connections with alumni was a good way to possibly get the necessary money, and that it was something that has been underutilized in the past.

Bobby Blanchard asked how many hours news editors work on a bad week, and Jordan Rudner stated that it could be more than 50-60 hours per week, only getting paid \$60 for that week. She also said that many college newspapers do not pay their students, but that those newspapers were not necessarily comparable. She said that she would try to look into that some more.

Pauline Berens suggested that students get course credit for the work that they do, as that is what many other departments do. Jordan noted that this was complicated because many of the students working for the different entities were not in the Journalism school, though Journalism students could usually get credit for their work at a certain level. Tess Cagle also noted that the reason she never worked at the Texan was the wages. Arjun Mocherla voiced that he thought student wages were the highest priority.

### Activity Reports from TSM Director and student managers

Frank Serpas brought the attention of the Board to the Supporting Student Voices cards, and described the initiative. He also described the Powers Retrospective, another special edition which individuals and businesses could sign their name in for a small price. Jeff Cohen suggested reaching out to Texas law firms, which Denise Twellman said that she had. She also said that they already had lots of campus involvement. Chris Gilman also noted that the Texas Travesty had lots of content that could be used in this publication if necessary.

Frank also stated that everything was still moving forward concerning the purchase of a new transmitter, which would not affect the operating budget. Robert Quigley asked about specific advertising goals for the summer and next year, to which Denise Twellmann responded that they were working on orientation packets and trying to emphasize everything that TSM offers, as opposed to just one entity at a time. She also said that she thought the reason Cactus Yearbook sales had doubled this year was likely related to the fact that we were selling it and not a third party.

Curt Yowell noted that the most pressing issue for digital was that the Daily Texan website cannot handle spikes in traffic. Jordan Rudner corroborated this idea, saying that the current Droople site is simply inadequate, crashing when only 200-300 people are on the site at once. They noted that they have discussed hiring a full time salaried employee to do a complete redesign, but that costs money, as having students redesign the website is not very effective as they cycle through each semester. For that reason, right now they are just focusing on fixing little things with the site. Denise Twellmen also noted that it makes it very hard to sell ads on a website that is so dated and incompatible with many things. Robert Quigley asked for specific numerical estimates for the cost. Riley Brands stated that in the past he had researched how much a redesign would cost, and got estimates between \$20,000-80,000 just for the original redesign, not including website maintenance.

Jordan Rudner had good things to say about everything at the Daily Texan, keeping it short but adding that they are finally getting new content out during the day instead of at night, which is a good initial step forward.

Riley Brands also hit some key points from his report, noting that he had talked with different colleges across campus to figure out strategies for the best way to enhance content. He also said that he had created a committee of minority students and that he had been training Claire to take over next year. Arjun Mocherla asked if Riley would like to comment on his recent absence from the office for a couple weeks, to which Riley declined, only saying that he thought he had done what was best.

Chris Gilman stated that everything at the Texas Travesty had been going well, with much of their recent time spent on student government elections. He said that many alumni had been reaching out due to the elections. Jeff Cohen asked what we could expect of the new members of executive alliance, to which Chris responded that they will try to keep the comedy up while actually being the promised voice of the students and enabling change. He said he has talked to them about cross-promoting the Travesty. Nosa Aimuyo suggested keeping in mind that they were only one small part of student government, and would not have all of the power.

Tess Cagle also hit some of her high points, noting that there was a bit of stress right now with meeting page deadlines, but that that would soon be over and she could shift her attention to sales.

Edward Stockwell went over some TSTV news, specifically that they would not be doing Aztex and that they are excited for 24Seven to begin next week. He also added that he had been testing out Square Space as a website option in the meantime before a full redesign looks like a viable possibility.

Rodrigo Leal also had good things to say about KVRX, emphasizing their two unofficial events for SXSW. He said that he hoped to do an official SXSW showcase for next year.

Jordan Rudner also added that she was excited to find out that the Daily Texan was winning another award. She did not know what the award was for yet, but would find out this weekend.

Bobby Blanchard made a motion to close the meeting, which was seconded by Robert Quigley and passed unanimously. The meeting was adjourned at 2:45 pm.